

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 and 12-22 are now pending in this patent application.

In this paper, claim 11 has been canceled, and claims 1-10 and 12-22 have been amended. In all of the claims, reference characters, which are unnecessary, have been deleted. The other amendments to the claims are described and explained in the discussions below.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's recognition of allowable subject matter in claims 4-6, 11-13 and 16-22. For reasons presented below, Applicants submit that all of the pending claims are now allowable.

SECTION 112, 2ND PARAGRAPH, REJECTION

Claim 10 was rejected under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Applicants traverse this rejection insofar as it might be deemed applicable to claim 10 as now presented.

In claim 10 as amended herein, both instances of "lock carriers" have been changed to --locking units--. This language agrees with the introduction of "locking units" in line 5 of claim 1. (Claims 8 and 14 have also been amended to recite --locking units--.)

In view of the amendments to claim 10 made herein, Applicants submit that claim 10 is in full compliance with the requirements of 35 USC § 112, second paragraph. Accordingly, Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

PRIOR ART REJECTION I

Claims 1-3, 7-10 and 14 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by US 4077590 (Shorey). Applicants traverse this rejection insofar as it might be deemed applicable to claims 1-3, 7-10 and 14 as now presented.

In this paper, claim 11 has been canceled, and the subject matter of claim 11 has been incorporated into claim 1. Since no rejection was applied to claim 11 and since claim 11 was recognized by the Examiner as reciting allowable subject matter, claim 1 and all of the claims that depend, directly or indirectly, from claim 1 should be allowable.

In view of the amendments to the claims made in this paper and in view of the foregoing discussion, Applicants submit that the rejection of claims 1-3, 7-10 and 14 under 35 USC § 102(b) has been obviated. Applicants therefore request that this rejection be withdrawn.

PRIOR ART REJECTION II

Claim 15 was rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shorey. Applicants traverse this rejection insofar as it might be deemed applicable to claim 15 as now presented.

Claim 15 depends from claim 1, which is now allowable, for reasons made evident in the discussion above under the heading PRIOR ART REJECTION I. Claim 15 is thus allowable, at least because of its dependence from an allowable parent claim. Applicants therefore request that this rejection be withdrawn.

OTHER PRIOR ART

Applicants have considered the other prior art cited by the Examiner. Applicants are not commenting on this prior art, because it was not applied against the claims in this application.

CONCLUSION

In view of the amendments, observations and arguments presented herein, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the objections and rejections stated in the outstanding Office Action and recognize all of the pending claims as allowable.

If unresolved matters remain in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact Frederick R. Handren, Reg. No. 32,874, at the telephone number provided below, so that these matters can be addressed and resolved expeditiously.

Application No. 10/559,926
Amendment dated December 17, 2009
Reply to Office Action of September 17, 2009

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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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